

# Almost twins by birth: hydropathy, temperance and the Scottish churches, 1840-1914

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## 1. Introduction

In October 1847, James Haughton of Dublin, of Quaker stock and a committed Irish temperance advocate, wrote<sup>1</sup> to Dr William Macleod,<sup>2</sup> an Edinburgh trained physician who had just taken over the management of the Ben Rhydding hydropathic Establishment near Leeds. "It does seem to me an interesting and beautiful coincidence that the water cure and teetotalism are 'almost twins by birth'. He continued: "Hydropathy and Teetotalism may well be termed as twin sisters in the work of purifying and elevating the human race". It is this very close relationship which this study explores. Although the temperance movement predated the arrival of hydropathy<sup>3</sup> in the early 1840s, once the latter made its appearance, the two fed off each. The connection was strong in Ireland, and in the north of England, but nowhere more pronounced than in Scotland. Temperance reformers saw in hydropathy a medical regime strongly in tune with their general convictions, and the two ran together to mutual benefit. *The Scottish Reformers' Gazette* (a temperance journal), when reviewing in 1842 one of the first books on hydropathy to appear, "warmly recommended the

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<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 26 October 1847 and published in the *The Water Journal, and Hygienic Magazine*, i, 188.

<sup>2</sup> Macleod's career, and the place of Ben Rhydding in the hydropathic movement is discussed in A. J. Durie, "The Business of Hydropathy in the North of England, c.1850-1930", *Northern History*, Spring 2002.

<sup>3</sup> A good general introduction to hydropathy is E. S. Turner, *Taking the Cure* (London, 1967) especially chapters 10-13. More recent work has included Susan E. Cayleff, *Wash and Be Healed. The Water Cure Movement and Women's Health* (Philadelphia, 1987), and Robin Price, "Hydropathy in England 1840-70", *Medical History*, 25 (1981), 269-80. Specifically on the movement in Scotland, see A.J. Durie (with J. Bradley and M. Dupree) *Water is Best. The Hydropathic Movement in Scotland, 1840-1940* (Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 2002).

volume to the medical and general public, and in particular to all Teetotallers *as the best work ever written on behalf of their principles*".<sup>4</sup> Medical men, who were temperance supporters, such as John Balbirnie,<sup>5</sup> took to hydropathy with enthusiasm, and the leading figures in both movements encouraged each other. Father Mathew – the Apostle of Temperance in Ireland – sent one of his temperance medals to the Austrian pioneer of hydropathy, Vincent Priessnitz, in September 1845 with a covering letter praising Priessnitz as "one who had much promoted the cause of total abstinence".<sup>6</sup> Mathew had heard about hydropathy some years previously from a book on the subject written by an enthusiast, one Capt. Claridge, and was enthusiastic about its virtues, which he acknowledged in a letter to Claridge as "a most powerful auxiliary in persuading men to join our glorious Society and take the Total Abstinence Pledge". As he concluded – perhaps naively – that Claridge was a teetotaler, he enclosed a temperance medal, one of the hundreds of thousands he distributed.<sup>7</sup>

The connection, then, was a close and beneficial one; those committed to the cause of temperance welcomed a medical regime which rejected the use of drugs of any kind, including alcohol, and insisted that a central part of the healing process was abstinence. Proper treatments, plenty of exercise, and a good diet, but no alcohol were what made up the hydropathic regime proper to the purist. Other therapies such as homeopathy and mesmerism, attracted some attention, but none as much as the water cure: and there is little or nothing in the literature of either the temperance or the health press about value of the older and still much patronized spas. Hydropathy was an obsession of many in the temperance movement. In its turn hydropathy drew much of its support from the ranks of the temperance army, as promoters, as practitioners and staff, and as clientele, whether as visitors

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<sup>4</sup> My italics.

<sup>5</sup> Balbirnie was an authority on lung complaints, and published amongst other works *The Philosophy of the Water Cure* (Bath, 1845).

<sup>6</sup> John Gibbs, *Letters from Grafenberg* (London, 1847), 229-30.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew's letter to Claridge, from Cork and dated 22 September 1842 was reproduced facsimile in the fifth edition of Claridge's *Hydropathy or The Cold Water Cure* (London, 1853). See also Colm Kerrigan, *Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement 1838-1849* (Cork, 1992).

or patients. This paper explores this connection; asks when, why and with what consequences it came about, and how the linkage was expressed.

## 2. What was hydropathy?

It was one of a series of alternative and new therapies on offer in the early Victorian period, a portfolio which included phrenology, mesmerism and homeopathy, all of which promised a surer and less painful road to good health, then – as now – a major preoccupation of all ranks of society, but particularly for those who had the means, temperament and time to pay for their health. Poverty forced acceptance of disease and ill health; prosperity made for more curative and remedial options. Hydropathy was based on a series of water treatments: showers, baths sheets and rubbing or massage, drawn together in a supervised and individually tailored regime that emphasized exercise, good diet and no alcohol. Although the use of cold water in, for example, the treatment of fever had a long pedigree in Britain, hydropathy as a general system for the treatment of a wide range of conditions originated in the 1830s on the continent in Austria at a centre in Silesia (Graefenberg) where Priessnitz had developed a very successful practice. News percolated to Britain of this new system, dubbed the cold-water cure, and aroused very considerable interest both amongst uncured patients and medical men who were dissatisfied with the existing therapeutic armory and were looking for new options. By the early 1840s there was a flow of British visitors to Austria, either as patients or observers.<sup>8</sup> They reported back with enthusiasm, many having claimed cures for themselves of long-standing complaints. The hydropathic cause was greatly promoted by Captain Claridge, whose search for health on the continent had taken him to Graefenberg in 1841 for a lengthy stay. Cured of his rheumatism, he set about promoting hydropathy in Britain, at London in 1842, and then further afield in the following year with lecture tours in Ireland and Scotland in 1843. Hydropathic practices began to appear, and cure centres were

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<sup>8</sup> Note the advertisement in *The Athenaeum* in March 1843 that a middle aged physician “was about to visit Mr. Priessnitz’s establishment in order to make himself personally acquainted with the water treatment ... happy to take charge of a Patient desirous of proceeding there”.

established: in England these were mostly initially in and around London, with Dr Paterson's Glenburn House at Rothesay in 1843 the first north of the Border. A decade later the provision of residential hydropathic treatment in Britain had become dominated by the large establishments in England of Malvern, Ilkley and Matlock, with Scotland trailing well behind. But the movement in Scotland changed gear in the 1860s with the foundation of Bridge of Allan, Crieff and Forres, and further underwent marked expansion in the later 1870s where there was what some called a "hydropathic mania". Almost inevitably a financial crisis followed in the early 1880s, and consolidation rather than new ventures was the rule thereafter. What stands out is how strong, and how permanent the movement was by the later nineteenth century in Scotland as against the rest of the United Kingdom. In 1900 Scotland could boast some 15 hydros, England had 50, of which most were but high-class hotels lacking any real tradition of treatment, but Ireland only two. "The Scotch, who are pretty cautious in their undertakings have plunged in a surprising manner into enterprises connected with Hydropathic Establishments" remarked William Chambers in 1877.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.What was the Appeal of Hydropathy?**

In trying to explain why the movement achieved such success in Scotland. We need to understand what its attraction was to a health-seeking public. There was an appeal both in medical or therapeutic terms and on temperance grounds. The first was strengthened as hydropathy toned down its initial claim to be a panacea and became more selective in the conditions which it looked to treat. Its armory of treatments became much more sophisticated, adding massage, peat baths, electro-magnetic stimuli well beyond the original core of the bath, sheet and the douche. Also important to their commercial appeal was the way from the 1850s in which hydropathic establishments altered in function and focus; they ceased to be purely curative institutions, to which only the seriously ill went. Increasingly they catered for a much wider constituency of those in need simply of a break, ministers from their preaching, and ladies from the demands of running a

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<sup>9</sup> *Chamber's Journal*, 7 September 1878, 561-3, "Hydropathic Establishments".

household, and became more and more commercial, providing leisure and pleasure, becoming high-class recreational rather than narrowly curative establishments. It was not a change of which the purists entirely approved; the veteran hydropath Samuel Kenworthy of Stockport was asked what he thought about the growing practice of providing entertainments. He allowed that at peak holiday times, there might be some relaxation, but only within very strict limits: “we certainly don’t approve of dancing or drinking alcoholics”.<sup>10</sup> But the tide was against him and his kind. The resident doctor lost his central position in the hydro’s affairs and fortunes to the chef and the entertainments manager. Baths and therapy were for some, not all.

And that, of course, raised real questions as to whether the old regime with its firm abhorrence of alcohol could be sustained. Tobacco, incidentally, was equally deplored by the orthodox, but could not be outlawed. Amongst the hydropathic doctors there was some tolerance of other systems; MacLeod used homeopathy, Barter hypnotism, Munro galvanism, Veale drugs. But not alcohol. Most hydros remained firmly temperance but some did not, notably the very large establishments at Peebles and Pitlochry, the Atholl. The very occasional indulgence to those with specific medical permission gave way to a general blind eye, or even a table licence. Interestingly, alcoholics were hived off to separate specialist institutions for treatment. Amongst the old school there was a grim satisfaction when hydropathic managements who had relaxed the ban on alcohol came to financial grief as did Macleod at Ben Rhydding, or at Peebles; “We understand that the Peebles Hydropathic Establishment has been sold to a new company for £26,000, the loss on last year’s working being estimated at £2,500. Its prosperity apparently declined on the introduction of intoxicating liquors. This innovation was forbidden after a short trial of six months....”<sup>11</sup> It was a campaign which was eventually to be lost, but some strongholds held out for many decades; with Crieff Hydro the last major hotel in Britain to acquire a table licence, as late as 1983.<sup>12</sup> Even then, it was a step taken with considerable anxiety: there was a constituency to be won, but also

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<sup>10</sup> *Healthy Life*, January 1895, Correspondence and Answers, 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Healthy Life and Hydropathic News*, May 1890, 62.

<sup>12</sup> Guy Christie, *Crieff Hydro 1868-2000* (second revision, Aberdeen, 2000), 144.

one whose loyalty might be forfeit, and generous supporters who would be alienated. But times had changed, and the conference trade, so essential to viability in the off-season, could not be drawn otherwise.

#### 4. Temperance and hydropathy

The message of hydropathy spread hand in hand with temperance, using the same networks. The organisers of Claridge's lectures in Glasgow in August 1842 were the same who had planned Father Mathew's visit some weeks earlier. In the audience were the leading temperance figures such as Robert Kettle, then President of the Glasgow Abstinence Society, and later secretary to the United Presbyterian Total Abstinence Society, and on the committee of the Glasgow Hydropathic Society formed as a result of the visit were temperance men. Indeed, the overlap lent itself to the obvious pun: in December 1842 the local correspondent of the *Scottish Temperance Journal* from Thornhill reported on the "progress of the cold water movement in this place".<sup>13</sup> The leading English temperance propagandist, F.R. Lees, launched in 1845 a journal called the *Truth Seeker, The Temperance Advocate and Journal of the Water Cure*.

Quite when the temperance movement first became aware of hydropathy is not entirely clear. Dr Rowland East, who ironically became a hydropathic doctor in the mid 1840s, was sharply criticised in 1842 for his failure to condemn the use of alcohol in a work on liver complaints entitled "Advice to the Bilious". But certainly Claridge's tour was reported, and on the platform for his lectures in Glasgow, as already noted, were several well-known temperance enthusiasts. The Committee of the Glasgow Hydropathic Society was chaired by William Campbell of Tilliechewan and included the Congregational minister – later Evangelical Union – Robert Simpson, and the Baptist James Paterson. The strongest support for the temperance cause at this time came from the smaller denominations, and this was to hold equally true for hydropathy. In August 1850 *The Scottish Temperance Review* published a paper<sup>14</sup> by their chairman, the Rev. T.C.

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<sup>13</sup> *The Scottish Temperance Journal*, December 1842, 204.

<sup>14</sup> *The Scottish Temperance Review*, August 1850, 354: report of the public meeting held in Glasgow on 8 July.

Wilson of Dunkeld (himself Church of Scotland) in which he stated that the overall membership of the Temperance League was 2,000. It was reckoned that 360 ministers in Scotland were abstainers, divided thus.

| Denomination               | No of abstainers |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Church of Scotland         | 24               |
| Free Church                | 71               |
| United Presbyterian Church | 140              |
| Other bodies EU, Baptists  | 125              |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>360</b>       |

It has been remarked by Logan,<sup>15</sup> that the early temperance movement in Scotland was largely a “UP affair”, and UP figures were certainly well represented in the hydropathic movement, notably the Meikles of Crieff, but, given the total strength of the denominational, the Evangelical Union was proportionately most committed to the twin causes. The temperance movement was later to broaden its denominational base, and to make it much less of a minority impulse, just as the hydropathic cause was greatly to increase its presence, but in the first phase the possession was nearly total.

**5. Hydropathy and temperance; their relationship**

The relationship between the temperance cause and the hydropathic movement was close. Temperance people, it can be suggested, were highly significant in four main ways.

**(a) As promoters and financial supporters;** of whom John Davie is a key example. Davie was a stalwart of the Chalmers Street U.P. Church in Dunfermline for over 70 years till his death in 1891.<sup>16</sup> He was active in

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Logan, “Drink and the Temperance Movement in Nineteenth-Century Scotland” (University of Edinburgh Ph. D thesis, 1976), 38.

<sup>16</sup> See The *Dunfermline Journal* of 4 May 1889, “Sketch of the Life of a Worthy Citizen”. See also A. Stewart, *Reminiscences of Dunfermline Sixty Years Ago* (Edinburgh, 1886), “The Temperance Cause and Mr. John Davie”, 102-5.

the foundation of the temperance cause in 1830 there – the Dunfermline Total Abstinence Society in Scotland was held to be the first of its kind in Scotland. He was a man of many causes of which temperance and hydropathy were but two; vegetarian, anti-tobacco, anti-vivisection, anti-compulsory vaccination, Chartism, peace, early closing movement, and advocate of women's suffrage. But temperance was his first and abiding love. "The great denominations", he said, "must follow the example of the Evangelical Union in Scotland and the Bible Christians in England.... Temperance is essentially the cause of Christ". Hydropathy was another cause which he adopted. In the 1860s Davie put his money into Waverley Hydro at Melrose, and its associated satellite venture at St Helens. This was a visionary scheme, which included the provision of a school for children undergoing prolonged hydropathic treatment, and run by William Crombie, minister of the local E.U. church;<sup>17</sup> his second son, was to qualify as a physician at Edinburgh and became resident physician at the Waverley, aged 24 in 1881.

There were many other lay supporters of hydropathy. Richard Ross, owner of an engineering works in Greenhead, and longtime member of Dowanhill U.P. church, was one of the group of Glasgow businessmen who put up the funds to enable Hunter to move from Gilmorehill to Bridge of Allan in 1866. Another Glaswegian, Robert Wylie of the long-established firm of Wylie & Lochhead was also an enthusiast. It was said of Wylie; that "hydropathy was his hobby" and he opened his own hydro at Ardvullin in 1865. Another entrepreneur was Andrew Philp, who like Davie, was another Dunfermline man, and also with strong temperance connections. Born in 1808 into a U.P. family, he began his business career as a tea merchant, but moved into the temperance hotel business, starting with the Balsusney Railway Temperance Hotel at Kirkcaldy. He built a chain of Cockburn Temperance hotels and added to them in the 1880s several hydros: Glenburn, Dunblane and Conishead. He was a life long friend of Thomas Cook, who, it will be remembered, started his career as an excursion organiser as Secretary to the Leicester Temperance Society. The Coats

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<sup>17</sup> W.D. McNaughton, *The Scottish Congregational Ministry, 1794-1993* (Glasgow, 1993), William Crombie.

family were also supporters of hydropathy: Thomas took 100 shares in the Athol, an investment which turned out disastrously, not that the loss would have hit a super wealthy man like himself anything like as hard as it did many small investors. There were many who took only a handful of shares: at Skelmorlie, while most of the capital came from the Currie family, amongst the investors were the brothers Jeffrey, both UP ministers, who lived in adjoining houses in Denniston with a connecting door knocked through! An interesting question is whether these people invested for profit or for principle? Did they hope to serve both God and Mammon?

**(b) As practitioners,** the list of those who came from the ranks of ministers heavily involved in the temperance cause includes Alexander Munro of Aberdeen, Forres and Melrose and John Kirk, who first experienced hydropathy as a patient of East at Dunoon, and himself was to set up a small establishment at Seamill. Alexander Stewart minister of the E.U. congregation at John Street since 1864, was a figure of much praise for his hydro at Heathcot near Aberdeen, at which he became Medical Superintendent in 1877, having attended some medical classes at the University of Aberdeen. His brutal experimental regime in the early summer of 1879 using Peruvian bark for drying out hopeless drunks in June 1879 was much reported <sup>18</sup> but it was in another area that he achieved more recognition; the value of hydropathy in easing the strains of mental overexertion. His *Hints on Health to the Overworked* first published in 1885 was much read. In England there were people such as Kenworthy at Stockport, Smedley of Matlock who set up his own branch of Independent Methodists, Grindrod at Malvern<sup>19</sup> and Thomas at Llandudno.

Only one hydropathic practitioner, by contrast, went the other way. East, founder of the hydro at Dunoon, left medicine for the Anglican ministry in the early 1850s. In Independency, it can be suggested that the charisma of the preacher/pastor – as much perhaps as his theology – was a key

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *The Christian News*, “The new cure for intemperance”, 21 June 1879.

<sup>19</sup> Awarded an honorary M.D. by the Archbishop of Canterbury for his services to temperance.

element in his success (under God), and in medicine it can be argued that the personality of the physician as much as his skill was central to his effectiveness. It remains a truism of the medical world that if people believe in their physician, and that what he is proscribing is good for them, then that alone – as much as the objective/scientific virtue of their treatments – is a very positive curative asset. The resident doctor was at the heart of the success, or otherwise of the early hydro. And those who were established pastors carried over into their medical work some of the skills and standing of their religious position. Others of the early hydropathists, who were not ministers nevertheless had a strong church background in either the U.P.s or the E.U. such Archibald Hunter, Dr John Becket<sup>20</sup> and of course the Meikles of Crieff. Thomas was a staunch U.P. and took a warm interest in the Temperance cause (according to his obituary in the *Strathearn Herald*). What is significant is that even when they acquired heavy responsibilities at their hydros, where they had practices to service and patients to see, they kept a very live interest in temperance affairs at the local level.

**(c) As staff.** The staff – cooks, bathmen, masseurs, cooks and maids – of the hydros had a part, if much less publicized than those of the principals, to play. The wives of the practitioners were also very important in supervising the running of the household and of the ladies' medical departments and some were very significant figures in their own right: Mrs Hunter for one, was a passionate advocate of vegetarianism. Regular visitors preferred familiar faces, and John Hope became so reliant on the bathman he always used at Ben Rhydding on his many visits there that he sent for Emmott during what proved to be his final illness. James Newbiggin at Seamill who had followed his pastor James Kirk there from Edinburgh, was a joiner turned bathman who became manager and from 1887 sole proprietor. He was attached to the Evangelical Union church in Ardrrossan. There was a presentation in May 1878 at the Melrose E.U. church to Mr

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<sup>20</sup> The *Christian News* (2 April 1881) in congratulating Dr John Becket on his new appointment at Windermere Hydro, (having previously been at Dunblane), noted that his father was "an old Evangelical Unionist, and at present a devoted member of the E.U. Church, Cathcart Road, Glasgow".

MacPherson, the manager who was moving to take charge of Philp's Cockburn Hotel in Edinburgh. A "sterling soldier in the temperance army" he had been for many years chief representative of the Good Templar Order in Roxburghshire as well as treasurer to the E.U. Building Fund at Melrose.

(d) **Temperance people as clientele** . What is evident from even the most cursory scan of the lists of visitors staying at the hydros, which were published on a weekly basis in the local press, is how often clergy and their family feature. The Red Clydesider and alleged revolutionary David Kirkwood was sentenced to a form of internal exile, he found himself for a period at Crieff Hydro where he found that the place was "fu' of ministers".<sup>21</sup> This was no new feature. A visitor to the Glenburn Hydro at Rothesay in early 1862 noted that amongst the patients undergoing treatment by Dr Paterson were several clergymen: "they were all very intelligent, indeed extra so, and we were all most agreeable amongst ourselves".<sup>22</sup> This was not, perhaps unique to the hydros: the clergy were great holiday takers, and to be found in disproportionate numbers at any select health resort. But the hydros certainly encouraged them by offering special terms, in return for which they might be expected to lead morning prayers or a Sunday service, and, of course there were special funds, the Smieton and the Paton, at Crieff to subsidise their stay. James Morison, principal of the E.U. Theological Hall in Glasgow and leading light of that denomination, numbered amongst his library several works on hydropathy, including Hunter's *Health, Happiness and Longevity* (1885).<sup>23</sup> Morison was a regular patient at various hydros, a six-week stay at Lochhead in Aberdeen in 1852, being the first of many such visits. Norman Macleod was another clerical supporter: an endorsement from him was included in the prospectus for Clunyhill issued in 1869, he having spent two weeks there "when seeking healing rest, and good for body and mind". The charges were exceedingly moderate and all its servants and officials extremely civil and moderate, he

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<sup>21</sup> Christie, *Crieff Hydro*, 18-19. To his disgust, they were playing cards all evening.

<sup>22</sup> Provost Brown of Paisley, *Autobiography*, ed. F. Hay (forthcoming).

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell Library. See William Adamson, *The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.*, (London, 1898).

reported: “no drawbacks of any kind” was his verdict.<sup>24</sup> The ranks of the clergy were swollen by church workers, missionaries and others of the same ilk. Many of these, one imagines, were not paying for their stay. Amongst those staying at Gilmorehill Hydro on census night in March 1861 was one Euphemia Carmichael, described as a “missionary in connection with the U.P. church”. John Hope, the Edinburgh temperance promoter, regularly sent at his expence some of his temperance agents who were in need of recuperation either to Crieff or Ben Rhydding. The churchy atmosphere appealed to some and it is not surprising, therefore, to find hydros advertising in *Life and Work* and offering “special liberal terms to clergymen”.<sup>25</sup> If Protestants of the U.P., U.F., or E.U. persuasion were over-represented, Catholics, Episcopalians, and Jews were in a tiny minority, although as the house steward Caw points out,<sup>26</sup> not unknown – to the great inconvenience of the catering.

## 6. Alexander Munro

Understandably, in the examination of hydropathy in Scotland, there has been a tendency perhaps to focus too much on Crieff, which was quite an exceptional business in its size and staying power or on Professor Kirk, whose Seamill venture was really a quite small-scale venture. Stewart of Aberdeen, who came to hydropathy in its second phase of development, and rather later in life than was true of most of the pioneers, would merit more attention. But a person whose career is well worth following is Alexander Munro (1814-1883) a figure without question of major importance to the hydropathic movement in Scotland. According to Richard Metcalfe, himself a very experienced hydropathist, Munro was “One of the most famous names connected with hydropathy in North Britain”. According to another authority – admittedly his son-in-law, the Rev.

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<sup>24</sup> The Cluny Hill Hydropathic Establishment [Prospectus] (Elgin, 1869).

<sup>25</sup> I owe this reference to Mrs Elma Lindsay.

<sup>26</sup> James Caw, *Reminiscences of Forty Years on the Staff of a Hydro, 1873-1913* (Crieff, 1914), 28.

Bowman – Munro was “the Priessnitz of Scotland”.<sup>27</sup> But, even allowing for some degree of family enthusiasm, there is no doubt as to the very important part that Munro played in the hydropathic movement for over thirty years Munro was the son of a Banffshire Congregational minister, John Munro of Knockando, and himself went to college in Glasgow and to the University in 1834. He ministered at Fraserburgh and at Banchory; attended Aberdeen University in 1838-1839 while he was minister in charge at Blackhills E.U. Church, where he continued as pastor for the next quarter of a century. Munro was a loved pastor, by all accounts, but probably rather stronger as a writer. Tributes in *Christian News* were genuine: he was always “genial and kindly in manner ... wise physician, penetrating thinker and writer, tender and loving preacher.” But, they added, “perhaps our late venerable friend’s brain power was greater than his elocutionary power...” Munro wrote on a whole range of matters – theological, hydropathic, temperance, medical and scientific. He cut his teeth as a disputationalist in the fierce debates that raged in and around the Evangelical Union in the mid 1840s over Calvinism; he himself reacting strongly against his father’s orthodox and rigid views “That God is willing that all should be saved” was one of his first publications (Edinburgh, 1846) and there were many other sermons and addresses published.<sup>28</sup> He was a frequent contributor to the *Christian News* and to the *Evangelical Repository*. But he never took just a narrow focus on matters of doctrine; emphasis on the wider issues of the health of society and was long an advocate of the role of the pastor as physician, or at least equipped with some diagnostic and curative skills, “We are not recommending that a minister of the gospel

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<sup>27</sup> This section draws on a variety of primary sources; obituaries, and the biography by his son-in-law, Dr Bowman, published in the *Evangelical Repository*, i (1883), 203-16. See also Richard Metcalfe, *The Rise and Progress of Hydropathy in England and Scotland* (London, 1912), chapters 12 and 13, “Introduction into Scotland”, esp. 58.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, Aberdeen Public Library, “*Discourse delivered in the Congregational Chapel, St Paul Street, by the Rev. A. Munro, Pastor of the Congregational Church, Blackhills, Skene, (in reply to the Rev. Davidson of the Free Church, 25 Jan 1853)*”. Also see *A drop in the ocean of theological controversy. A discourse in reply to a lecture on Morisonianism* [24pp. Aberdeen, 1853] .

should become a general medical practitioner, but a safe adviser in every ordinary case of disease that would come his way in the discharge of ordinary ministerial duties”.<sup>29</sup>

A good example of his style is to be found in *The Letters to Her Majesty* (London and Edinburgh, 1864),<sup>30</sup> which carried the significant subheading *Possibility and Responsibility in Relation to National Health*. The first letter (of the nine) starts by observing how few live to a full ripe old age, even in Speyside where the writer had been brought up, and which the Queen had just visited. This state of affairs is not, however, to be accepted passively. Disease and premature death, are not foreordained, but indeed anti-scriptural (p.14). What is needed is far more instruction, especially amongst mothers and nursery maids in sanitary knowledge, advice which he was shortly afterwards to develop further in his publications *The Nursery Hydropathic Guide*, and *The Ladies Guide to Health*.<sup>31</sup> Munro challenged the view held by some of the ultra-orthodox that providence is to be accepted, and outcomes are given. Man can, he argued, and should make a difference. Agriculture is now much more productive than it used to be, but not because the Creator has become more generous, but because of better management [“we have become more enlightened and painstaking receivers of his every ready bounty”]. So it should be with health; what was once accepted, can now be improved, and premature deaths avoided. Key improvements would include better ventilation, better diet, play for children and exercise for all. Munro believed that good health would be to the benefit not just of the individual but to all society; “a perfectly healthy man is rarely a disobliging neighbour”. His analysis shows his rejection of determinism, and an ability to argue clearly and sensibly. In the preparatory note he said that he had thought of the letters being published anonymously, as the arguments about the sanitary question might be weakened by his

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<sup>29</sup> *The Aberdeen Water Cure Journal*, vol. i (1859), “Correspondence and comments”, 59-60.

<sup>30</sup> It was significantly printed at the Christian News Office, Trongate, Glasgow.

<sup>31</sup> Both of these, by the Rev. Alexander Munro of the Loch-head Hydropathic Establishment, were published in 1864.

known, and controversial, position on hydropathy,<sup>32</sup> he having recently been involved in a sharp debate of the value – or otherwise – of his M.D. degree. The *Letters* raise a range of issues, including the need to take care of, and keep in balance the health of body and mind, a theme to which Munro often returned. One of his last publications was on this topic; entitled *Mental and Bodily Health: Their Interdependence* (Glasgow, 1882).

Parallel to his interests in hydropathy and health ran his commitment to temperance. Munro was a frequent lecturer in the 1840s and the 1850s to the Aberdeen Temperance Society, a simple, clear and thorough speaker who insisted on abstinence from alcohol in all its forms. According to Cook,<sup>33</sup> himself a leading light in the temperance cause, amongst the speakers at the New Year temperance soirees in Aberdeen were Munro and Blackie, who at that time was another enthusiast for hydropathy. “No one was more willing or acceptable as a lecturer to the Aberdeen Temperance Society during its earlier years than the Rev. Alexander Munro. Dr Munro was early identified with the Temperance Movement and did much for its promotion. As a lecturer he was simple, clear and thorough. As an authority on health and the care of the body he insisted on abstinence from alcohol in all its forms. His appearance at once secured the confidence of his hearers. The open pleasant face, lit up with a smile ... a happy temperament.” Despite the other demands on his time, this interest remained a continuing priority. On his move to Forres, where he took charge of the new Hydro there, Munro very quickly became involved in temperance work there, becoming chairman of the local total abstinence society.

But it is as a figure in the hydropathic movement, that Munro deserves the most recognition. Quite when or where Munro first came across hydropathy is not known, although he was certainly familiar with the circle at Glasgow around the Hydropathic Society there. During the typhus epidemic there in the winter months of 1847 and the following spring,

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<sup>32</sup> “The public relation sustained of late years to the ‘Water Cure’ at Aberdeen, [might] prejudice the minds of any against what was to be advanced on the sanitary question”.

<sup>33</sup> A. S. Cook, *Pen Sketches and reminiscences of Sixty Years* (Aberdeen, 1901), 89-90.

when the Society campaigned for the Fever Hospital to adopt hydropathic therapy, Munro came at their invitation to deliver several lectures. And Munro was to maintain a monthly surgery in Glasgow for many years. It may have been their support that encouraged him to become the editor of a new publication, cheap and practical, in August 1848, the *Journal of Health*, in which, according to his introductory address, hydropathy was to be the chief topic.<sup>34</sup> It ran for two years, and was reasonably successful, the circulation rising from an initial 800 to over 2000. But as he lacked medical training, the medical queries that readers sent in, or so Munro said, were referred by him for a professional opinion to a practitioner in England, who was probably Macleod of Ben Rhydding. That this was a deficiency, he recognized, and in January 1850 he informed his readers that “the Editor is at present in attendance on a course of medical study, with a view to being able to exert a greater influence in the promotion of health, and this with the cordial consent and co-operation of his congregation.”<sup>35</sup> The record shows him to have attended courses at Marischal College over the next few years in Chemistry and Anatomy (1849-1850), Surgery, Practice of Medicine, and Midwifery (1851-2 and 1853-53) but he did not take the full degree. The true extent of his medical qualifications, and the value of the M.D. which he acquired from a New York College of somewhat uncertain standing – the New York Hygeio-Therapeutic College – was to be a serious issue during the early 1860s. Significantly, as part of the desire for respectability, his son Alexander Begg Munro was to qualify as a doctor at Aberdeen in 1870, and to assist his father as physician in residence at

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<sup>34</sup> Mitchell Library, *The Journal of Health*, Introductory Address, 3. Munro insisted that the journal’s attentions would be wider than just hydropathic treatments: “Hydropathy – including as the term has of late come to be understood, such matters as Air, Exercise, and Mental repose – will be the chief topic. But no topic will be overlooked that has an important bearing on the great question of health. The field over which the editor will have to travel, is therefore wide.”

<sup>35</sup> *The Journal of Health*, vol. ii (1849-1850), *Incidental Matters*, 99.

both Waverley and Cluny Hill.<sup>36</sup> This was a pattern which was general: amongst other hydropathic pioneers whose sons obtained a recognised medical qualification were Archibald Hunter, Andrew Philp and William Crombie.

However much he had achieved in the hydropathic field with the launch of his journal in 1848, Munro was not to remain merely a medical journalist and home practitioner as his starting to undertake the academic study of medicine showed. In early 1850 he opened a hydropathic establishment at Angusfield, a small-scale venture. At the opening dinner held on 23 February 1850, Professor Blackie was in the chair. Just back from Dunoon, about which he had written a well-received series of articles in the Aberdeen Press, he may well have been the person who induced Munro to take this bold step. Blackie had persuaded Dr East to make some exploratory visits to Aberdeen, but East's eyes were turning elsewhere (he shortly thereafter went to Leicester), and Munro was the man on the spot to take charge – with his wife as Matron – of what was a small venture. Better-off patients stayed in the hydro but what were described as “persons of limited means” could be accommodated at Skene, with either Munro or some of his congregation on a reduced tariff of 12s 6d to 15/- a week as against 25/- to 30/- at Angusfield.<sup>37</sup> The Census of March 1851 shows him still resident there, and described in the enumeration schedule as Superintendent Minister Blackshields and Conductor of Hydropathic Establishment.<sup>38</sup> The initial reception was sufficiently good for Munro to remove in the spring of that year to Lochhead, Woodhill Road, which was a much larger undertaking, being able to accommodate up to forty [later 60] patients. Munro was behind the addition of Turkish baths, a feature which a number of the most progressive hydros had. These opened early in 1861 and the “bulbous domes

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<sup>36</sup> Born at Skenc on 6 April 1846, Alexander was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School, and then at the University of Aberdeen in Arts 1862-1865; graduating M.B.C.M., in 1870 and M.D. in 1872. His career took him to Waverley and Cluny Hydros before moving after 1874 to Bradford where he died in February 1894.

<sup>37</sup> *The Aberdeen Journal*, 3 July 1850.

<sup>38</sup> Aberdeen Public Library, census 1851, 144, Book 5, District 38, p.4. I am grateful to Ms Rhona Jack who tracked down and deciphered this reference.

and gilded minarets” that the architect was required to deploy must have made a strange contrast with the normal style of Aberdeen buildings. This Loch-Head establishment was to be highly influential. There were a few failures – the editor of the *Aberdeen Herald* died there in November 1862 while undergoing treatment – but there were many more cures and recoveries. An Aberdonian emigrant resident in Australia, when describing his successful treatment for fever in April 1891 at the Wickham Terrace Hydro in Brisbane, traced his conversion to hydropathy to a stay thirty-nine years previously in 1852 as a patient at “Dr Munro’s hydropathic establishment.”<sup>39</sup> The expansion of business required support for Munro and he was joined by a newly qualified doctor from Edinburgh, Dr William Meikle, in 1857. Sadly, he died there in November of the following year but the family connection was not to lapse; his younger brother Thomas, taking his place, who secured his M.D. from Aberdeen in 1861. The latter 1850s and 1860s was a period of tremendous activity on all fronts; Munro edited a revived journal of hydropathy called the *Aberdeen Water Cure Journal and Sanitary Reformer*, issued a series of well-regarded hydropathic pamphlets, and compiled a *Family Hydropathic Guide. A Practical Water Cure Manual*, which appeared in 1870. His address on the title page was given as “Melrose”, Munro having moved on twice from Aberdeen since the *Nursery Hydropathic Guide* and its partner, *The Ladies Guide to Health* (otherwise known as the Maternity Hydropathic Guide).

Both of these guides were published in 1864, bearing the address “Hydropathic Establishment, Lochhead, Aberdeen”. But that year was to see his partnership with Meikle dissolved, with each going his own way to a new venture. Meikle moved to Crieff and Munro, giving up all his pastoral duties, to Forres, to a new purpose-built hydro where he was to be full-time as the doctor in charge, Loch-head being abandoned. Munro had been interested in a move some years before; and had been exploring possibilities at Bridge of Allan in December 1861. What drew him to Forres was an exceptional financial deal combined with the lure of a purpose-built hydro, rather than the adapted buildings of Loch-head. The local promoters of

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<sup>39</sup> *Healthy Life*, August 1891; P.E. Gordon, “Hydropathy in the Treatment of Typhoid Fever” [from the *Brisbane Courier*, 7 May 1891].

Cluny Hill reckoned on Munro's "magnetic influence"<sup>40</sup> drawing visitors from all over Scotland. From there he was later to move to the very large and new Waverley Hydro at Melrose for a few years, at the invitation of John Davie, and then back again to Forres. He then had a final phase of peripatetic hydropathic lecturing, though there was talk of a venture at Gilsland, before moving south to Devon and a new hydro at Bishop's Teighton (near Dawlish) where he died suddenly in January 1883 at the age of 70. His writings alone would have justified his high place in the hydropathic movement and the reality is that his life is a template of the movement, illustrating as it does the close connection between temperance and hydropathy. Important though he was, it is necessary, however, to stress that Munro was no isolated figure: Kirk and Stewart were two other figures from the same mould in the Evangelical Union forge. It is an interesting question as to what was it that made E.U. and Congregational ministers so susceptible to hydropathy: a willingness to take unconventional lines in matters of health, as well as of church order and theology? They were certainly people of extraordinary energy, and mostly very good advertisements for what they preached and practised, living to a ripe old age.

While undoubtedly Munro, and others like him, were interested in hydropathy for its financial advantages to them through the successful operation of hydros as businesses, Munro was firmly convinced of the curative value of hydropathy for all, regardless of their income or class – as well as for horses! Munro, and he was not alone in this, time and time again showed an uneasiness over the *de facto* rationing of provision to those with the means to pay for the lengthy treatments required. He made repeated attempts either to get official funds for hydropathic treatment for the poor, and repeatedly called for hospitals to recognise hydropathy or to fund a hydro hospital for the poor as John Smedley had done at Matlock. Others felt the same: we need less palatial hydropathics<sup>41</sup> was the way that it was put by one authority. It was an argument that played well with many

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<sup>40</sup> *The Forres Gazette*, 16 August 1865. Extract from the Speech of the Chairman of the Cluny Hill Hydropathic Company, at the official opening of the hydro.

<sup>41</sup> *Healthy Life*, August 1887, 96 citing *The Reformer*.

of his wider constituency,<sup>42</sup> but aroused less enthusiasm from the investors whose dividends he threatened. Munro's obituary<sup>43</sup> noted that he was "constantly advertising cheap rates for ministers of the Gospel and professional men generally, and if ever he differed from his Directors, it was generally on the question of liberal terms for invalids of limited incomes". Some response there was in the emergence at Rothesay and elsewhere of hydropathic boarding houses but it was a theme to which Munro returned time and time again, as he did to the cost – in his view needless – of unnecessary deaths through bad health practice. There were other causes which he held dear, and, for example, the question of women and medical education was another on which he and others of his circle expressed radical views. Munro had his degree from an American college at which Lydia Fowler was professor of physiology and which turned out a stream of lady-graduates Munro firmly approved: "it must be admitted that for their own sex at least, and for young children, women are better qualified for the duties of physician than men".<sup>44</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

While, there was, as has been shown in this study, a very close connection between temperance and hydropathy, it does not do to overdraw the connection. The relationship between temperance and hydropathy was a two-way street; but not a closed system. There were those in the temperance movement who continued to place their faith in orthodox medicine, or at least only flirted with hydropathy as one of a series of alternatives. The *Christian News* gave room for advertisements relating to homeopathy, and even mesmerism. Not all hydropathic supporters were teetotal and temperance, nor were they only U.P., U.F. or E.U. Robert Brown of Paisley, a firm patron of hydros, was staunchly establishment, elder in the Old Kirk

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<sup>42</sup> A letter writer to the *Elgin Courier*, 10 June 1864 concluded a letter in support of hydropathy by urging his readers that they should give thanks that the "The philanthropic Dr Munro is so near our vicinity".

<sup>43</sup> *The Evangelical Repository*, vol. i (1883), 215.

<sup>44</sup> *The Water Cure Journal*, vol. iii (1861), 153-8, "Medical education for ladies". See also in similar vein, 186-90, "Lady Physicians".

in Paisley and not averse to a glass of whisky. The connection was strongest in the first few decades when there were only a handful of hydros, and these were mostly small curative centres. But the expansion of the 1870s, concurrent with a growing support for temperance more widely anchored in denominational terms, ironically coincided with a dilution of the original bedrock beliefs of the movement. Many of the new hydros were much more centres of leisure and pleasure, with baths – but not the same old strict medical regime. The infectious sick were actually discouraged and the place of the doctor, once central became subordinate to the rising role of the resident entertainer. Nor were all hydros dry, especially those established in the later nineteenth century. Nor were all the clientele quite as teetotal as they might have been, a change at which some administrations actually connived. When the Atholl Palace Hydro at Pitlochry was taken over in December 1914 by a school evacuated from Yorkshire, the girls were surprised to find the basement lockers in which they were to stow their games equipment full of empty whisky bottles. But it is noticeable that the older hydros, with their conservative regime fared much better than the rash of new ventures of the mania in the later 1870s. The E.U. group of Forres, Aberdeen, Seamill and Melrose (and the related ventures at Bridge of Allan and Crieff) all continued to be financially successful, whereas most of the new failed, to the subsequent advantage of Andrew Philp. The teetotal clientele were loyal.

That the temperance cause and the hydropathic movement were closely linked – Haughton's twins – has been the thrust of this study. It is confirmed in the experience of Ireland where the collapse of the temperance movement there after the Famine, and the death of the apostle of temperance, Father Mathew, was reflected in the weakness of the hydropathic cause thereafter. Not for Ireland, despite as good a start in the 1840s any expansion to match that in Scotland, or the North of England. Temperance was, to adjust the metaphor, more mother of hydropathy than sister; without that firm base hydropathy as a movement could not develop.

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